A faded red tent

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/16353407.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	Ghost!Hannibal, Kid!Will, Blood, Angst, at least by my standards, Will is still mourning so tread carefully
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Fall-Blooming
Collections:	Hannictober 2018!!!!!
Stats:	Published: 2018-10-20 Words: 885 Chapters: 2/2

A faded red tent

by FhimeChan

Summary

In the previous part, kid!Will met ghost!Hannibal. Now, Hannibal is fading.
Written for Hannictober 2018, prompt 'Ghost Stories'.

Notes

Thank you so much @j9-j9 for beta'ing! :)

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

The damp air clings to Will's curls, pulling them in front of his eyes. It seeps into his clothes, reaching his skin, flowing down to permeate the soft mud where Will's boots sink in.

Hannibal is at his side, an almost invisible bulk who carelessly walks over puddles and floats through tree branches. Will's hands, wrapped inside wet pockets, grip the fabric in an attempt not to reach out. In the two weeks since their first meeting, Hannibal has faded.

At first it was only a small distortion which made his face difficult to read; then Hannibal lost entire chunks of color at once. His hands had become more and more slippery until Will could not hold onto him anymore.

Now he is a shadow, hard to see and hear.

The first solid drop of rain hits Will's nose. Two weeks ago, he would have picked up his pet to spare her paws from the mud and to keep both of them warm. Today he shivers.

A whisper in his ear, close yet almost impossible to discern from the crackling of the dead leaves. "You should find cover, it'll rain for a while."

Will nods, not turning to look at his dissolving companion.

Between the trees, the faded red tents of the fair are just coming into sight.

Few people have braved the walk to the travelling circus on that gloomy Sunday; the laughter of the few kids present rings hollow in the absence of the carousel's tune.

Will stretches the fabric of his hood to the breaking point, hoping it was large enough to cover his face. He does not want the other kids to see him.

He turns to Hannibal, who opens his mouth and speaks. But the loud chattering of the woman selling candy bars overpowers his voice, and Will winces. There are not enough of Hannibal's features left to understand if he is pleased, or not.

Out of habit, Will lowers his right hand, expecting soft fur and a warm tongue to comfort him. Then he remembers.

He closes his eyes for a brief moment, squares his shoulders and carries on with his mission. He knows he must come home with the required prize, or there will be problems. Displeasure, maybe shouting, and above all the pervading sense of failure would chain Will to his bed, unable to stomach dinner. He does not want it.

And so, Will walks over to the carousel man, and asks if there are worn old clothes for him and his father.

The man looks down at him, and Will is filled with the stranger's pity towards a small child. In answer he makes himself smaller, lets his arm dangle from the patched old hoodie.

The man speaks kindly. Maybe the circus has some old tents that could cover Will against the cold, or shelter him from the rain; he can go and look, if Will would just wait one moment.

But someone else has heard the hushed question. While the kind man goes, another steps towards Will with a derisive tilt of his mouth.

He takes a coin out of a small bag, and tosses it to the mud at Will's feet. "I'll give you another if you beg," he says, and laughs.

Will can perceive without seeing the movement behind him. He raises one hand, stopping the invisible from harming the visible, with a hushed plea, "Please, don't. Please."

Maybe he hears a snarl, close and low-pitched, but the air stills.

Will waits, eyes to the coin, not picking it up, not reacting until the laughing man gets bored and walks away. The promised tent arrives, and Will flees.

The red tent is big enough that Will can sit on it and wrap the spare fabric around his body and over his head. It is a relief to be protected from the rain and alone.

In the silence he can hear Hannibal.

"I could have stopped him."

"No."

Will can not articulate it. The way bad accidents in which he was involved always made his life worse. Since the wounded kid under the oak tree, the teachers are eyeing him suspiciously, their whispers carry a fear that Will can feel but not understand.

"I'm fading."

Yes, I know, Will is about to answer, but the tone of the voice carries something else.

Suddenly Will understands.

"You need blood." A thought hits Will and he laughs, giddy, finally childish. "You can have it."

His father had given him a pocket knife and taught him how to use it; a small cut, enough to draw blood, is not that painful.

When it drips over Hannibal, all the colour flows back. Will grins at Hannibal's blank expression, which he thinks is surprise, with just an edge of suspect. He does not know the right word to describe it, but it makes him happy.

He laughs again and tentatively touches Hannibal's hand. Bony. Solid. Will squeezes it and his cheeks hurt.

The rain pours, but Will unwraps the tent enough to pull his friend inside his warm red cocoon.

After a while, Hannibal says, "This is only temporary." The tone is carefully blank of any emotions.

"Why?"

And Hannibal is at loss for words. Will leans into him, smelling the blood, content.

There's a final chapter

Chapter Summary

For the subscribers: I updated the *series* with one last chapter!

It's here, hope you like it :)

End Notes

Thank you for reading! :D
Any kind of feedback is much appreciated, except for 'you posted 4 days early!'
...I know. Sorry. A lapse in self-control. (Hey, I waited a whole week!)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!